

EPAULETTE**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The invention relates to the field of clothing and in particular to ornamental epaulettes applied to garments.

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Epaulettes, or shoulder ornaments, are decorative additions to garments worn by both men and women. They may be applied to garments including robes and cloaks, shirts, coats and dresses and are most frequently found as a part of the uniform of organisations such as an army, navy, air force or police force, or as
10 a part of the insignia of rank for officials such as ambassadorial dignitaries, mayors and commissioners. They are usually provided as a matched pair, one for each shoulder.

Epaulettes normally include, as well as provide a mounting surface for, badges, buttons and insignia of rank or degree, braid stripes and the like. An
15 epaulette is generally in the form of an elongate platelike element that extends along the line of a wearer's shoulder, and may extend beyond the shoulder and arm of the person wearing the garment and may support insignia below the epaulette as well as upon its upper side.

The mounting of ornamental epaulettes to uniforms includes such known
20 systems as shoulder flaps, attached at one end to the garment near where the sleeve and shoulder of the garment meet, or would meet, if the garment does not have a sleeve. The shoulder flap is passed through a loop or other mounting means supplied on the epaulette, the other end of the shoulder flap then being secured to the garment near the collar, or place the collar would be if the garment
25 does not have one, often by a button. The flap is frequently formed of the same material as the garment and positions the epaulette along a single plane along the shoulder of the wearer.

In most situations where the epaulette forms part of a uniform it is desirable for the wearer of the uniform to look well matched with others in the
30 uniform and to present a neat and dignified appearance whether alone or with others. It is also desirable for such wearers to appear fit and therefore well trained.

Where a wearer has square shoulders, the overall appearance of the wearer is improved. However, where a wearer has somewhat narrow or sloped shoulders, the presence of the epaulettes may actually draw attention to the deficiency in appearance, as the epaulettes may appear to be dragging down the cut and fabric of the garment and may sit at an excessive angle. This may cause the wearer of the uniform to present a sloppy and non-matched appearance.

It is therefore an object of this invention to provide an epaulette that is adapted to be worn by persons with a range of shoulder widths and shapes and to present a more uniform appearance than conventional epaulettes.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention provides an epaulette for securing to a garment, said epaulette including:

a first part securable to a garment with a lower section of said first part in a first position at or adjacent to a shoulder area of said garment; and

15 an elongate second part securable to said garment at a second position on said garment that in use of said garment is laterally inward of said first position;

wherein said first and second parts are joined by hinge means that in use of said epaulette are laterally outward of said second position and above said first position on said garment.

20 A preferred embodiment of the invention further includes an elongate third part secured to said first part and secured to an underside of said second part by first attachment means at an attachment position on said second part that in use of said epaulette is laterally inward of said hinge means. The third part may be positioned closely adjacent to said garment between said first part and said attachment position. The first attachment means may include a component which
25 holds the second and third parts together at the attachment point, said component being mounted to said second part for slideable movement within a limited range along said second part.

30 The first attachment means may include a button, badge or other decorative element that in use of said epaulette is positioned above said second part and secured to said component, said component extending through an elongate opening in said second part to said third part. The first attachment means may also hold together the third part and a shoulder flap of the garment.

The third part may include one or more loops through which the shoulder flap can be passed in use of the epaulette. Alternatively the third part may include a tubular section through which the shoulder flap of the garment can be passed in use of the epaulette.

5 The third part may include second attachment means for securing the third part to the garment at or adjacent to the first position thereon. The second attachment means may be one component of a first two-component fastening arrangement, which cooperates with the other component thereof when the other component is secured to the garment. The first fastening arrangement may be
10 any one of a loop-and-pile or hook-and-eye or press-stud arrangement.

The second part may include third attachment means for securing the second part to the garment at the second position thereon. The third attachment means may be one component of a second two-component fastening arrangement, which cooperates with the other component thereof when the other
15 component is secured to the garment. The second fastening arrangement may be any one of a loop-and-pile or hook-and-eye or press-stud arrangement.

One or both of the first and second parts may be formed of fabric and have an internal stiffener. The hinge means may include one or more layers of fabric. The internal stiffener may include the hinge.

20 A detachable clip may be provided to hold together the third part and the shoulder flap of the garment at a position laterally inward of the first part of the epaulette when in use.

The epaulette may include a fourth part that is secured within a space surrounded by the first, second and third parts and at least partially fills said
25 space. This has been found to enhance the epaulette's appearance in some situations, by avoiding the appearance of too large a gap between the second and third parts.

An advantage of the invention is that it improves the appearance of the wearer through ensuring that the upper, or second, part lies in a generally
30 horizontal plane, or at least closer to the horizontal than it would have using the shoulder flap system described above, for a range of shoulder widths and slopes. A related further advantage of the invention is that an epaulette manufactured in one size can accommodate a range of shoulder widths and slopes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Other features and advantages of preferred embodiments of the present invention will be readily apparent to one of ordinary skill in the art from the following written description with reference to and, used in conjunction with, the
5 accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a set of three partial front elevations of a garment fitted with a prior art epaulette;

Figure 2 is a perspective view of an epaulette according to a preferred embodiment of the invention secured to a garment;

10 Figure 3 is a front view of the epaulette of Figure 2, secured to a garment; and

Figure 4 is a schematic front view of an epaulette according to Figure 3.

Figure 5 is a front view of an epaulette according to a further embodiment of the invention.

15 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Figures 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) illustrate the problem addressed by the invention, showing an upper part of a shirt 100 worn by a wearer 101 and having an epaulette 103 of one known type secured to shirt 100. Epaulette 103 is secured in place by a shoulder flap 104 sewn to the shirt at a position "S" adjacent
20 to a seam 105 joining a sleeve 106 to a body section 102 of shirt 100. Shoulder flap 104 extends laterally inwardly from position "S", and is secured to shirt 100 by a button 107. Epaulette 103 has a loop 108 on its underside and shoulder flap 104 is passed through loop 108, thus securing epaulette 103 in place.

In Figure 1(a) wearer 101 is comparatively square-shouldered, meaning
25 that a line 110 extending laterally outwardly from collar 111 along the uppermost part of the body section 102 is at a small angle to the horizontal. Epaulette 103 extends approximately parallel to line 110.

In Figure 1(b) wearer 101 has more steeply sloping shoulders, so that line 110 and therefore epaulette 103 also slope more steeply than in the case of
30 Figure 1(a). Figure 1(b) represents a less satisfactory appearance than that of Figure 1(a). In Figure 1(c), wearer 101 is narrow-shouldered by comparison with Figure 1(a) and 1(b), meaning that the across-the-shoulders width of wearer 101 is shorter. If the shirt 100 is not tailored to allow for this, point "S" and seam 105

may actually be located somewhat below the actual shoulder 109. Although Figure 1(c) shows an exaggerated case, this situation is common and may lead to the epaulette 103 failing to sit neatly along shoulder line 110 or even being difficult to secure in place at all. The effects shown in Figures 1(b) and 1(c) may occur together and to varying degrees, with a consequent lack of uniformity of appearance among different wearers.

Figures 2 and 3 show a shirt 1 fitted with an epaulette 2 according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Although shirt 1 is used as an example, this is in no way limiting, as the epaulette 2 may be fitted to other types of garments. In Figure 3, some dimensions have been exaggerated for clarity. A first, platelike part 10 has a top end 11 and a lower end 12, top end 11 being connected by a hinge 15 to an outer end 22 of a second, platelike and elongate part 20. Part 20 is similar to the conventional epaulette 103 and bears various insignia 9 in known manner. Lower end 12 of the first part 10 is connected to an outer end 32 of a third part 30. Adjacent to an inner end 31 of third part 30, third part 30 is secured to second part 20 in a manner described below by an ornamental button 33. An inner end 21 of second part 20 is secured to shirt 1 by cooperating halves (not shown separately) of a loop-and-pile fastener 23 (of the type known under the trademark "Velcro"), one half being on shirt 1 and the other on the underside of part 20. Near the outer end 32 of part 30, a loop-pile fastener 24 is provided, whereby part 30 is secured to shirt 1.

The way in which this embodiment of the invention functions is shown in the simplified schematic front view of Figure 4, which can be compared with Figure 3, like numerals in these Figures denoting like elements.

With the second part 20 positioned generally horizontally as shown, the hinge 15 allows the lower end 12 of the first part 10, which would normally correspond to point "S" of Figure 1, to be located along a curve 70. In Figure 4, position "b" on 70 path has been selected, with positions "a" and "c" shown as possible alternatives. Further, if second part 20 is not required to be precisely horizontal, path 70 can have a range of different positions, so that a still wider range of possible positions for lower end 12 of part 10 is possible. It has been found that by providing an epaulette 1 in the form shown in Figures 2 - 4, the conditions shown in Figure 1 can be alleviated, with upper part 20 able to be

carried more nearly horizontally for a range of shoulder shapes and positions of the point "S".

Because third part 30 is of fixed length and secured to part 10, it is necessary, if epaulette 2 is to be able to fit a range of wearers and garments, that the location of button 33, which is secured at a fixed position on part 30, be movable along second part 20. This is illustrated in Figure 4 which for simplicity shows part 30 as extending in a straight line from point "b" to a point "b'" corresponding to button 33. Positions "a'" and "c'" are shown as alternative positions corresponding respectively to "a" and "c". In practice, however, the third part 30 is intended to follow (i.e. lie along) the shoulder line 25 (corresponding to line 110 in Figure 1) and this may be significantly curved due to a wearer's shoulder shape. Figure 1(c) shows that this can arise also in the case of a narrow-shouldered wearer. Figure 4 shows one example of part 30 having a curved shape, with outer end 32 again being at "b" and button 33 being at point "d'" along part 20. Thus, by allowing relative rotational movement between the first part 10 and second part 20 at hinge 15 and, when the third part 30 is present, a variable attachment point of button 33, many different shoulder types may be accommodated with one epaulette. Where a shoulder is sloped, the first part 10 should be generally upright, for instance at a position such as "a", while where a shoulder is square, a position such as "c" is more appropriate.

Note that the third member 30 does not functionally affect the working of the hinged connection 15 or the relative angle between the first part 10 and second part 20 when the fasteners 23 and 24 are positioned as shown in Figures 2 and 3.

It is preferred that third part 30 is provided, so that the appearance of the epaulette 2 is improved, and as a convenient means of attaching the epaulette 2 to the shirt 1 (i.e by supporting one half of fastener 24 or in an alternative manner set out below). However, it is strictly not necessary to provide the third part 30 at all in order to perform the invention, as the lower section 12 of the first part 10 could easily be fastened to the shirt 1 directly rather than via part 30 and fastener 24.

Whether part 30 is included or not, epaulettes according to the invention may be secured permanently to shirt 1, for instance by sewing or even gluing,

rather than releasably. However, releasable fastening is preferred (eg to allow laundering of the shirt 1 without the epaulettes). Suitable releasable fastening means usable for example for fasteners 23 and 24 include any one or more of such two-component arrangements as button and button holes, zips, press studs, magnetic fasteners, loop-and-pile or hook-and-eye arrangements.

The movability of button 31 along part 20 of epaulette 2 is achieved by providing a slot 25 in part 20, the slot 25 extending along a part of the length of part 20. Slot 25 can in practice have a length much shorter than part 20 without adversely affecting the amount of adjustability available. Ornamental button 31 has a wire ring (not shown) extending from its underside through slot 25 and through a hole in part 30, being held in place by a pin 26. In this way part 30 is held against part 20, but relative movement is possible. As an alternative, a recessed or hidden sliding connection between part 30 and the underside of part 20 could be used, of which suitable types are known in the clothing manufacturing art, so that no movable part need be visible on part 20.

Optionally, an epaulette according to the invention (not shown) could be tailored to a particular wearer's requirements, with part 30, if provided, being secured beneath part 20 at a fixed position therealong, for example by sewing. Another possibility (not shown) is to use a releasable but non-sliding fastening arrangement, such as a loop-and-pile fastener. Because a loop-and-pile fastener can allow some variation in the actual relative positions in which parts 20 and 30 would be held together, various shoulder shapes can be accommodated with a single epaulette. These arrangements also obviate the need for any movable part to be visible on the upper side of part 20.

In another possible embodiment, not shown, the second part 20 may extend beyond the hinged connection 15 such that the first part 10 and second part 20 connect in a 'T' formation rather than the 'L' formation shown in Figures 2 and 3.

Figures 2 and 3 have shown a shirt 1 without a shoulder flap such as shoulder flap 104 of Figure 1. To mount epaulette 2, it is simply necessary to fit one half of fastener 23 and one half of fastener 24 to the shirt 1 and apply the epaulette 2. Where a shoulder flap is provided, it may be removed. However, if there is a flap and it is preferred not to remove it, half of fastener 24 may be

secured to the top of the flap at a position similar to the position of fastener 24 in Figure 3. The other end of the flap may be buttoned down to the shirt 1 in known manner.

However, Figure 5 shows an alternative arrangement, again with some exaggerated dimensions for clarity. Using the same numbers as in Figures 2 and 3 for the same elements, epaulette 2 is secured to shirt 1 having a shoulder flap 27 by way of fastener 24 of which one half is secured to flap 27 and by way of fastener 23 securing part 20 to shirt 1. Button 31 holds together parts 20, 30 and flap 27, its wire ring (not shown) passing through all three of them, and being secured below flap 27 by pin 28. The button (not shown) normally provided for securing flap 27 to shirt 1 can be dispensed with. For neatness, part 30 is desirably of about the same width as flap 27.

Still other alternatives are variations on the arrangement shown in Figure 5. Instead of using a loop-and-pile or other fastener 24, one may provide a flattened ring (not shown) secured to the bottom end 12 of part 10 (or outer end 32 of part 30) and adapted to have flap 27 pass through the ring, flap 27 then being secured at its inner end 31 to shirt 1 or part 20 in any of the ways set out above. Another possibility (not shown) is to provide one or more loops on the bottom of part 30 and pass the flap 27 through the loops before securing with button 31 in the way shown in Figure 5. Fastener 24 is then not needed. Yet another possibility is to provide a completely separate clip or ring (not shown) adapted to fit snugly over both part 30 and flap 27 at outer end 32 of part 30 and so hold them together there.

Both of parts 10 and 20, and 30 if included, may be made in a way typical of epaulettes, namely by providing at least two thicknesses of fabric (not shown) stitched together lengthwise and enclosing stiffening material (not shown) between the thicknesses to hold the epaulette 2 in the form shown in Figures 2 and 3. The stiffening may be of additional fabric layers (not shown), card, or plastics of suitable resilience. Part 30 may be made with no internal stiffening. Hinge 15 may be provided simply by stitching across the length of part 20 at the required location, with there being no internal stiffening at the hinge 15. Alternatively, a single internal stiffener (not shown) may be used for both parts 10 and 20, and have a score line or be formed with a web-type hinge in known

manner at the position of hinge 15. Many other materials and methods of construction will suggest themselves to the person skilled in the art and are within the scope of the invention.

Where the natural slope of the shoulder of the wearer is such that an unsightly gap is left showing a wedge of vacant space between the members 10, 20 and either part 30 or shirt 1, one or more filler elements of some kind may be provided. As an example, Figure 5 shows a single fourth part 40 which breaks the wedge shaped space 41 into smaller areas which are less unsightly. Fourth part 41 is in the form of a small loop secured to part 10, but may take any suitable form and be secured to any or all of parts 10, 20 or 30.

Although it is found in practice that satisfactory results can be obtained for a wide range of wearer characteristics with a single suitably chosen set of dimensions for the lengths (as seen in Figure 3) of parts 10 and 20, another possibility is to make an epaulette (not shown) in which the length of part 10 is tailored to an individual person's shoulder to achieve a given angle of part 20. Such an epaulette is also within the scope of the invention.